

# Stephen Kinzer at FFF Conference 2008, 1 of 6

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Stephen Kinzer on "Regime Change: Promise and Peril" at the Future of Freedom Foundation's <http://fff.org> Restoring the Republic, 2008.

Stephen Kinzer is an American author and newspaper reporter. He is a veteran New York Times correspondent who has reported from more than fifty countries on five continents. During the 1980s he covered revolution and social upheaval in Central America. In 1990, he was promoted to bureau chief of the Berlin bureau and covered the growth of Eastern and Central Europe as they emerged from Soviet rule.

Playlist of Kinzer's lecture: [http://www.youtube.com/view\\_play\\_list?p=25CC550549F509ED](http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=25CC550549F509ED)

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stephen kinzer is a veteran new york times correspondent who is reported from 50 countries on five continents during the 1980s he covered revolution and upheaval in central america in the 1990s he covered eastern and central europe as they were emerging from soviet rule from 1996 he was the new york times bureau chief in istanbul turkey his several books include all the shah's men in american coup a book that when i read it i was just absolutely ecstatic i mean here was one of the greatest books i've ever read that encapsulated an easily readable form what the us government had done in iran in 1953 and the consequences the blow back from from that policy in in what they did and then he's got another book his most recent um at least on foreign policy overthrow a century of regime change from hawaii to iraq which was just about as good as the iran book giving the a whole summary of regime change operations as part of of uh u.s foreign policy from from the time of the hawaii takeover through the spanish-american war and all the way up through iraq and so we try to get stephen to come last year and he was not able to make it and we were ecstatic we were really excited that he accepted our invitation it is a tremendous honor to have him with us today please welcome stephen kinzer that was great thank you thanks so much uh what an honor to share a platform with uh such a remarkable figure and to be flanked uh by the portraits of such great figures you know i think that uh one of the things that has happened

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things that has happened recently in the last year or two is something that the ron paul campaign both reflected and helped cause and that is i think it's the breakdown of the traditional right left separation on foreign policy that doesn't exist anymore i've spent the last several days on capitol hill meeting some of those members that ron was referring to and i too was told that a great bill we put in to try to halt the rush to war in iran had to be deleted from a bill because it was too controversial and what it said was no war can be declared unless congress agrees that is now a controversial statement and so much so that it can't even be included in a law passed by the u.s congress now while i was up there i was really impressed to see that there are a handful of people up there very much opposed to the idea of our continued involvement in regime change operations and we found some very conservative republicans and some very liberal democrats on that side so i think the uh the divisions in american politics are changing new coalitions are emerging i think if there could be one possible good benefit that came out of the iraq war it might be that for at least a time which we can now take advantage of americans are beginning to realize that we can't control events in every part of the world and maybe this isn't such a good idea so uh those of us that have always said no nothing

good can come out of the iraq war but might find there was one little exception now i really enjoyed uh staring uh when i could tear my eyes off congressman paul at that picture of thomas jefferson uh particularly for one reason thomas jefferson is the author of the phrase that i take as my guiding principle and it's the principle that has pushed me through all the books i've written i actually had this up on my wall

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had this up on my wall 20 years ago when i was a correspondent in nicaragua and i've followed it ever since it's a line from the declaration of independence and it reflects my view i don't consider myself a polemicist or an ideologue or a bush basher but i am reality based i'm fact based i i like to deal with what's real not with visionary fantasies of utopia and in the declaration of independence it says let facts be submitted to a candid world that is all we are trying to do this is not a radical departure the foreign policy that we are trying to promote what we're trying to promote is actually the foreign policy that george bush promised us in his first debate if we're pro if we're strong but humble they'll respect us that's true but what happened to that it's the political process that ron paul talked about that sucks people into this republican democrat combine and that is the real the real difference in in on capitol hill it's those uh in the large majority who are part of this republican democrat group and then there are the few outsiders that's the real division and i think the challenge for us is to make sure that fee those few outsiders don't remain a few we need to keep building up that group and one of the ways i think we can do that is to show america that we now have an example going on every day in the middle east of what our interventionist foreign policy brings you don't have to look into the history books anymore you don't even have to buy my books anymore you can read it every day in the newspaper and the tragic toll of this war is just the latest in a long series of episodes that have put us into a position so different from the america that our founding fathers imagined you know when john winthrop wrote we shall be as a city upon a hill

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wrote we shall be as a city upon a hill and the eyes of all people are upon us what he meant as he explained in his other writings was we're going to create a great system and a great country here and then if other countries like some things that we're doing they can copy us that was what he meant but at some point around the somewhere in the 19th century we we abandoned that position and we decided that we're not just going to set an example we're going to go out in the world and make everyone be like us we decided that we'd found the magic key to prosperity and democracy and we were going to share that with everyone else and not coincidentally that kind of democracy that we envisioned meant the access of american corporations to the resources of the whole world on the terms that we decide were just for us and a policy which used to be called the open door policy which i like to call the kick in the door policy it was forcing ourselves on every country now we've gone so far to the point where in our last quadrennial defense review we have declared as the official policy of the united states that we are not going to tolerate even the beginnings of the rise of any country that could one day become a pure power they call it in other words what we've told the world is we've decided that no other countries are allowed to try to increase their power now if all the leaders of all the countries in the world read that and say oh i guess america doesn't want us to increase our power so we won't do it we'll just do what they say that would be wonderful this is an example of the magic wand theory of uh government i like to call it but that can't happen in fact countries logically want to increase their power and that means they're automatically going to come in conflict with the united states this doctrine is a recipe for constant conflict constant war constant intervention a couple of weeks ago in chicago i had a debate with uh prominent neoconservative columnist and theorist who was a great promoter of the iraq war

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who was a great promoter of the iraq war now wants to bomb iran yesterday and during my opening statement i uh thoughtlessly used a phrase that really got him going and i said that the policy you guys are trying to follow is really the modern version of trotskyism it's constant constant revolution and he took great umbrage at this i hadn't really thought it through but actually a lot of these neocons are ex-trotskyites from

their college days so he got very nervous about that so i said okay okay excuse me please i didn't mean i don't mean to insult you if you don't consider yourself a trotskyite uh what do you consider yourself what what a historical tradition would you place yourself in and he said well how about a wilsonian i want to ask what's the difference now uh as you heard earlier i've written a series of books about the history of american intervention i wrote a book about how the u.s overthrew the government of guatemala in the 50s and another book about how the u.s overthrew the government of iran i've written also a book about nicaragua that talks a lot about american intervention there after each of those books i i really felt satisfied that i told the whole truth you know i people didn't know what had really happened in guatemala but i went out there and i ripped the veil of lies off and i told the whole truth and showed everyone what really happened i felt very satisfied with myself but you know that that emotion never lasts long and after a while i began to realize that i really hadn't told the whole story there was one thing that was missing i came to realize that if you want to understand american intervention abroad and all these coups and overthrows and interventions that we've carried out you cannot consider them as a series of distinct unrelated episodes you have to look at them as a continuum that stretches out over more than 100 years

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